

3. ON SOME HYBRID DUCKS BRED IN THE SOCIETY'S GARDENS.
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 SOCIETY.

(Aves, Pl. CLVIII.)

I have the pleasure of exhibiting Mr. Wolf's drawing of both sexes of a Hybrid Duck bred this season in the Society's Gardens, between a male of the Common Sheldrake (*Tadorna vulpanser*) and a female of the White-fronted Sheldrake or Mountain Goose of Southern Africa (*Casarca cana*). The old female *Casarca* was acquired by the Society at the sale of the late Lord Derby's collection in 1851. She has on three previous occasions bred in the Gardens: in the first instance with an Indian male of the Ruddy Sheldrake (*Casarca rutila*), and subsequently twice with one of the male hybrids produced by her union with the Ruddy Sheldrake.

Upon being placed this spring in a small pond in company with a pair of the Common Sheldrake, she so persecuted the male with her attentions that she succeeded in persuading him to tread her, though in the society of his proper mate. The result was that she laid fertile eggs, and hatched and successfully reared three strong hybrid birds (Pl. CLVIII.), two of which appear to be males, and one a female. They present a curious combination of the colours of the two parents, though the dusky-grey flanks seem scarcely deducible from either. The female has the bill black; in the male it is flesh-coloured at the base, as in the male parent. The female also takes rather after her mother's likeness, in possessing white round the beak and round the eye. The black hood in both sexes is derived from the male parent.

In the Gardens this year we have also bred two other broods of Hybrid Ducks. One of these was the produce of a male Dusky Duck (*Anas obscura*), and a cross-bred female between the Dusky Duck and the Wild Duck. The other was the issue, as we believe, of parents themselves *both* cross-bred, and both originating from hybridism between the Tufted Duck (*Fuligula cristata*) and the White-eyed (*Nyroca leucophthalma*). But, as there is a male pure-bred White-eyed Duck in the same pond, we cannot be quite certain on this point.

During the next season we hope to take such measures as will put to test in the case of the *Anatidæ*, a favourite *dictum* of naturalists, and one which has recently met the approval of a high authority* upon such matters, that "it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to bring forward one case of the hybrid offspring of two animals *clearly distinct* being themselves perfectly fertile."

* Darwin, "On the Origin of Species," p. 26.



W. B. M.

H. B. R. T. U.

between YADORNA VULPANSER and CASARCA CANA

M. & S. B. B. B. B.